



The Most Dangerous Game

by Richard Connell

[Things To Know/ Things To Think About](#)

Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game," when stripped down to its bare essentials, is a story about humanity's relationship to animals, and the qualities that make human beings and animals both similar and different. In the story, Connell is most preoccupied with understanding the one faculty that we typically use to distinguish humans from lower order creatures: the ability to reason, and self reflect. Although reason is generally celebrated as one of humankind's cardinal virtues, Connell introduces the character of General Zaroff to make the reader challenge this common supposition. General Zaroff, in every way, is the polished aristocrat. He's well spoken and courteous, has a taste for the finer things, and has all the advantages of a man of wealth and rank. Despite being a representative of all the best civilization has to offer, the General's reasoning leads him to the logical conclusions that: human life is easily expendable, and that the powerful have a God given right to do with the weak as they so desire. What Zaroff desires is the thrill of hunting and killing a worthy adversary, in this case, other human beings. To readers, what becomes most disconcerting is that what makes us human—our ability to reason—can also lead us to commit atrocities far worse than those committed by any animal. While an animal kills instinctually, for survival, General Zaroff kills premeditatively, for fun. By the end of the story, the reader will have a different opinion about what most distinguishes humans from animals. This piece is perfect for a lesson introducing modern literature, particularly the way modern literature is informed by the horrors encountered by soldiers during WWI. This piece could also be taught in a history class dealing with WW1, and the way in which writers of that time were influenced by current events. Finally, the piece would resonate well with students, in any English or Humanities class, that are studying the themes of human nature, and moral responsibility.

Before Reading

1. In your opinion, what most distinguishes humans from animals? In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

During Reading

1. The word “civilized” is used repeatedly throughout this story, especially in relation to the character General Zaroff, and his luxuries. What does the author’s use of repetition accomplish? How do you think the author feels about the way we define “civilized” ?

After Reading

1. In the beginning of the story, Whitney says that he believes evil places give off signals, or electrical waves. Despite the supernatural dimension of Whitney’s words, the story is realistic, and “Ship Trap Island” is revealed to be inhabited, not by supernatural forces, but only by humans. Given the ending of the story, what do Whitney’s words suggest about the nature of evil? Using evidence from the text, how do you think the author would define evil?

Connections In Text

1. A common trope in other works of literature, and film, is the idea of “human hunting.” Human hunting is defined as the act of hunting or killing other humans for pleasure, entertainment, or sustenance. This theme is explored in works such as “The Hunger Games,” “The Purge,” “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” and John Connolly’s “The Book of Lost Things.” How do you explain the prevalence of this theme? Why do we find the concept of “human hunting” so disturbing?

Further Readings

For Teachers:<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/connell.html>

This link provides teachers with a number of teaching resources to use in conjunction with their lessons on this topic. Resources include both suggested activities, and full-length lesson plans.

For Students:<http://www.sparknotes.com/short-stories/the-most-dangerous-game/canalysis.html>

Although sparknotes should never be read in place of the original text, it can be used to supplement one's readings to better understand plot, the author's intentions, character analysis, themes and symbols.

Domain-Specific Vocabulary:

game (hunted animal), Cossack, aristocrat, marksmanship, quarry, civilized

G8 Vocabulary List:

tangible (8), chateau (8), discern/ discernible (8), elude (8), stealth (8), venerate/venerable (8), deplorable (8), futile (8), wholly (8), amend (7), reputation (7), leer (7), incense (7), barbarous (7), accustom (7), complaint (7), zeal (7), agile/agility (7), tangible (6), deliberate (6), concern (6), fringe (6), crimson (6), bluff (6), side (6), canopy (6), capital (6), fascinate (6), inspire/inspiration (6), channel (6), consider/consideration (6), indeed (6), venture (6), divert (6), execute (6), blunder (6), tense (6), stagger (6), wrench (6), cove (6)

G6 Vocabulary List:

tangible (6), deliberate (6), concern (6), fringe (6), crimson (6), bluff (6), side (6), canopy (6), capital (6), fascinate (6), inspire/inspiration (6), channel (6), consider/consideration (6), indeed (6), venture (6), divert (6), execute (6), blunder (6), tense (6), stagger (6), wrench (6), cove (6), beam (6), comrade (6), due (6), dusk (6), humane (6), relinquish (6), acquire (6), anxious (6), balm/balmy (6), bliss (6), bluff (6), crush (6), fantastic (6), presume (6), relish (6), sullen (6), watch (6), nerve (5), name (5), grave (5), lunge (5), fresh (5), vitality (5), crisp (5), concern (5), weary (5), manor (5), barrel (5), trim (5), vivid (5), conduct (5), narrow (5), nod (5), cease (5), bitter (5), wit (5), attribute (5), gasp (5), nature (5), mongrel (5), casual (5), assure (5), regretfully/regret (5), prospect (5), fault (5), choice (5), tense (5), bough (5), char (5), conceal (5), waver (5), dash (5), beast (5), cautious (5), cease (5), clamor (5), coarse (5), rather (4), chart (4), dread (4), thick (4), class (4), tough (4), wrestle (4), noise (4), calm (4), appear (4), thrash (4), point (4), regard (4), salute (4), advance (4), vast (4), passion (4), nod (4), compliment (4), reason (4), obstacle (4), fashion (4), grind (4), manner (4), condition (4), regret (4), pattern (4), acknowledge (4), mock (4), rough (4), ridge (4), wholly (4), absurd (4), agony (4), aggravate (4), attempt (4), clasp (4), depart (4), dine (4)

G4 Vocabulary List: rather (4), chart (4), dread (4), thick (4), class (4), tough (4), wrestle (4), noise (4), calm (4), appear (4), thrash (4), point (4), regard (4), salute (4), advance (4), vast (4), passion (4), nod

(4), compliment (4), reason (4), obstacle (4), fashion (4), grind (4), manner (4), condition (4), regret (4), pattern (4), acknowledge (4), mock (4), rough (4), ridge (4), wholly (4), absurd (4), agony (4), aggravate (4), attempt (4), clasp (4), depart (4), dine (4) yacht (3) yard (3) velvet (3) world (3) weather (3) prey (3) Captain (3) must (3) near (3) abrupt (3) startle (3) realize (3) slim (3) power (3) faint (3) conserve (3) jagged (3) cliff (3) edge (3) wonder (3) forbid (3) moss (3) rot (3) progress (3) structure (3) massive (3) creature (3) alarm (3) accent (3) General (3) quality (3) perfect (3) publish (3) charge (3) wine (3) bore (3) boast (3) gasp (3) extraordinary (3) belief (3) channel (3) exercise (3) deck (3) glare (3) corridor (3) function (3) alert (3) rough (3) scent (3) relieve (3) fear (2) remark (2) squint (2) damp (2) hunt (2) nonsense (2) observe (2) suggest (2) legend (2) nervous (2) poison/poisonous (2) sense (2) zone (2) propeller (2) could (2) expert (2) direction (2) view (2) balance (2) struggle (2) surface (2) faint (2) strength (2) extreme (2) recognize (2) crush (2) drag (2) swirl (2) bother (2) tangle (2) trail (2) settle (2) stiff (2) gigantic (2) coat (2) honor (2) disaster (2) refuse (2) grind (2) target (2) defeat (2) leather (2) execute (2) congratulate (2) delight (2) torch (2) excellent (2)

G2 Vocabulary List: fear (2) remark (2) squint (2) damp (2) hunt (2) nonsense (2) observe (2) suggest (2) legend (2) nervous (2) poison/poisonous (2) sense (2) zone (2) propeller (2) could (2) expert (2) direction (2) view (2) balance (2) struggle (2) surface (2) faint (2) strength (2) extreme (2) recognize (2) crush (2) drag (2) swirl (2) bother (2) tangle (2) trail (2) settle (2) stiff (2) gigantic (2) coat (2) honor (2) disaster (2) refuse (2) grind (2) target (2) defeat (2) leather (2) execute (2) congratulate (2) delight (2) torch (2) excellent (2) large(1) island(1) place(1) know(1) try(1) see(1) bush(1) hundred(1) mile(1) admit(1) world(1) understand(1) pain(1) soft(1) bit(1) strange(1) Captain(1) old(1) chill(1) sudden(1) sea(1) ship(1) danger(1) glad(1) rest(1) engine(1) favorite(1) quick(1) dive(1) cry(1) warm(1) wave(1) minute(1) beard(1) real(1) heel(1) leopard(1) giant(1) follow(1) huge(1) ocean(1) beast(1) skull(1) sip(1) grin(1) gold(1) guest(1) silver(1) turkey(1) command(1) kill(1) country(1) stay(1) adventure(1) murder(1) appear(1) twenty(1) dozen(1) knife(1) weird(1) hum(1) idea(1) escape(1) fox(1) climb(1) annoy(1) bottle(1) perfect(1) name(0) dark(0) night(0) brown(0) black(0) agree(0) best(0) hot(0) light(0) laugh(0) quiet(0) sound(0) chair(0) jump(0) mouth(0) animal(0) sleep(0) food(0) tree(0) log(0) stone(0) door(0) straight(0) thumb(0) home(0) answer(0) tall(0) nose(0) lion(0) tiger(0) elephant(0) bear(0) monster(0) king(0) grow(0) joke(0) bed(0)